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## THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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The ends and functions of education have been variously classified by writers according to the particular object which they have had in view, and it cannot be said that any one of these classifications is right to the exclusion of the others. Underlying all of them, however, and serving as a basis for all others, is the old, always assumed, division into economic, or vocational, and cultural, or liberal. Under the former is included all forms of vocational and professional training of whatever nature. The object is to render the individual a proficient, productive unit in society, not only for society's sake, but for the sake of the individual as well. The second function—cultural—is not primarily for the sake of enabling the individual to earn a livelihood, though it may contribute toward that end in an indirect way, but it is rather to acquaint him with the fields of human endeavor that tend to develop his aesthetic and moral nature.

Political and sociological training is ordinarily included under the second of these heads. In a very real sense, however, it may be separated from the cultural subjects and made a co-ordinate third factor, for the reason that while such training may not at all times properly be said to contribute to one's economic well-being, yet neither does it have as its object merely the broadening of one's interest. The aim of such educational effort is to fit the future citizen for the part which he will (or should) subsequently have to fill as a political unit in society, whereas the cultural phase has to do rather with the development of one's social nature—the teaching him to mingle with other men, to work with them, and to enjoy their intercourse, written or spoken. In other words, there are good grounds for making the ends of education three—vocational, political (including the sociological), and cultural; and any educational system that fails to perform all three of these in form adapted

to the particular student in question fails to perform the function for which it was created.

Such being the case, any undue emphasis placed upon any one of these phases can but result in lessened efficiency. And it is because we have, unconsciously perhaps, but none the less truly, tended to overemphasize some phases to the neglect of others, that the teaching profession has laid itself open to attack on the part of unfriendly critics. Each aspect has its inherent value, but when it comes to striking a balance between them, undue prominence has too often been accorded the newer factor, to the neglect of the older, but equally important one.

Two of these aspects have long been under discussion, and an adjustment between them is in sight. The cultural or liberal training is, of course, the older, historically, and perhaps is still the more firmly rooted. With the tremendous economic progress that has been accomplished within the past hundred years, however, and the recognition of the need of education for the masses as well as for the classes, the vocational aspect is at last coming into its own. It should be noted particularly that this industrial training is assuming its rightful place in *secondary* education, provision being made for it, indeed, even for those unable to continue their attendance in the regular secondary schools.

But the third phase of education is still far from receiving its due consideration. The other phases have been duly emphasized, but so far as acquainting a student with the real nature of the political institutions that we expect him to support, or insisting upon the importance of keeping abreast of current events, or suggesting the nature of the great social questions with which the state itself is being forced to cope more and more, our secondary schools do little indeed. Few graduates of our high schools have any but the haziest of notions, and these full of error, regarding the political world about them; while their ideas of the economic institutions of society are scanty and warped out of all proportion through lack of proper perspective, and still fewer graduates have any conception of the larger social problems of the day.

The theory of the case is clear. One has but to give the situation a moment's thought to recognize the increasing importance of

this training. Every month it is suggested that we transfer to the state some function hitherto left to private initiative. The government is constantly asked to regulate and supervise new fields of enterprise. Monopoly and competition alike are controlled by government commissions. It is neither to condemn nor to defend this tendency that attention is called to it, but solely to urge that adequate performance of these functions implies previous training and thought.

The significance of the whole matter becomes more apparent when we bear in mind that the settlement of many of these questions is being forced directly back upon the people. Direct election, initiative and referendum, and recall have taken the place, in a measure, of representative government. At every election people are called upon to settle political, economic, and social questions of the widest significance.

It is axiomatic that if five-sixths of our children do not complete the high school, and if they are forced to settle such questions as these, some attention of more than superficial nature must be given to this phase of their education. *Culture avails one nothing when anarchy prevails, and technical or industrial training is useless when hasty or unwise laws deaden industry.* The conclusion, in theory at least, is inevitable—that any educational system which does not give students some conception of the social and political forces of the world about them does not fulfil its proper function.

The theory of the case is thus clear. None can deny the need of such training nor that the training should be thorough and begun early. But what are the facts? Civics is probably taught, in some form or other, in practically every high school in the United States. But, with this much granted, there are two things to be borne in mind. One is that in most of the schools it is an elective. With our insane desire to fill up our high-school curriculum with as many electives as possible, and a seeming desire not to force any student to take any study that he does not wish (unless, as one superintendent conceded, “it be English”), a very large proportion of our students never take civics at all. English we force them to take; in most places, fortunately, we also compel students to take ancient and modern history; vocational work we rather expect to be taken;

but for this great, tremendously significant responsibility which the future citizen cannot well shirk, and for the attempted avoidance of which we unsparingly denounce him, we make little or no provision at all.

As President George Gunton has so well said:

At present, for the great army of youths who go from the public schools to the workshop, there is no mental preparation for intelligent dealing with these subjects. They are left to jostle against their fellows in the workshop, to hear and feel the causes for discontent; they read the inflammatory and sensational stuff in the newspapers, listen to more or less acrimonious discussion of social questions in their shop meetings and organizations; and all without the slightest background of educational preparation for forming rational judgments. The only natural result is that their decisions are made up from feelings and prejudices created by their economic environment.<sup>1</sup>

No wonder, then, that the politician of the lower type can dominate our political life; that public opinion is unable to settle upon any course of action and compel results; and that there are many intelligent men within our own land who urge, more or less under their breath but none the less strongly, that popular government is a failure. The present writer is interested in testing, every little while, the knowledge of his students upon currents, or on things so common that one takes it for granted that everyone knows them. The last such test, given to a class of sixteen college Juniors and Seniors, yielded results not widely variant in any sense from those of previous tests, and the result is given in this place simply because it is typical. If any reader believes this result to be out of the ordinary, let him try the same questions upon his own students.

What are the qualifications of a voter in this state [Idaho]? [3 correct answers.]

When will the next election be held in Idaho? [8]

Name the candidates for the United States Senate on the three leading tickets. [1]

Why has Congress found it necessary to pass a war revenue bill? [4]

Name one amendment to the constitution of the state of Idaho, to be voted on at the next election. [0]

Name four measures passed at the present sitting of Congress (the longest in our history) other than the tariff measure. [2]

On what date does President Wilson's term expire? [4]

How long will it be before ships will be allowed to pass through the Panama Canal? [10]

<sup>1</sup> *National Education Association Proceedings*, 1901, p. 133.

Who is the president of France? [9]

Who is the present pope? [1]

What are the fundamental principles of the Progressive and Socialist tickets? [0]

The writer has repeatedly given tests similar to this, in a Kansas normal school, in an Ohio college, and in the University of Idaho; the results are nearly always the same.

That there are many students of secondary and collegiate rank who are able to give intelligent answers to such questions as these is not to be doubted for a moment. There are also institutions which take justified pride in the economic and social training that is given the students. There are high schools that turn out students strong in this respect, who know something of government in the United States, both constitutional and otherwise, and who make it a point to keep abreast of the times. Some students get and maintain an interest in politico-economic questions early in life. But most men and women gain such active interest as they ultimately do get only when they are later, in active life, brought face to face with the problem of seeking a solution to the difficulties at their very doors. We complain sometimes because the people do not take a greater interest in national and state problems, yet so far as the educational system is concerned we make little effort to arouse the consciousness of these problems early enough to be of much avail. There are two chief reasons for this. One is that the teachers themselves are open to wide and serious criticism, owing to their lack of knowledge along these lines. *Their* training was likewise at fault. They are often not familiar with the facts nor do they appear to appreciate their value to students in a plastic condition. This is true, not only of the actual teachers themselves, but, so far as the latter half of the criticism is concerned, the same thing is true of principals and superintendents. They urge lack of time as an excuse, but it is noteworthy that they have time for everything else, and in any event, in spite of the general feeling to the contrary, teachers are very far from being the overworked class that we have deluded ourselves—and others—into thinking we are.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See an article by the writer, "Social Survey in Rural Education," *Educational Review*, October, 1914.

The second difficulty arises from the fact that, owing in part to the foregoing, the textbooks are not satisfactory oftentimes, and even where they are satisfactory, teachers religiously hold to them as things to be memorized. As a matter of fact, any text on government, however good, becomes antiquated, in a degree, almost immediately upon publication. To teach subjects of this kind without newspapers and magazines and to do it efficiently is an absolute impossibility. Such weeklies as the *Literary Digest* are excellent for their help in this line, and though the use of such papers is becoming more general, it is still very unsatisfactory. The present writer has, for a number of years, been compelled to fall back upon the expedient of requiring such reading as rigorously as the work in the text itself, and of grading quite as thoroughly upon the student's acquaintance with such reading, under all circumstances, as upon any assigned book work. Students, even of university rank, under their present training, cannot be relied upon to do this reading unless required to do so. Perhaps, indeed, they never will voluntarily do too much serious reading.

So much for civic training. Let us turn to the other aspect of the question—that of training in social and economic questions. Courses along these lines have yet to find their true place in our educational system. It is not that courses in technical economics or in the principles of sociology are, or should be, required. But it does seem reasonable that students in secondary schools should know that there are problems of unemployment, of transportation, of housing, and of unionism. As has already been suggested, men and women are now finding themselves in a position where they are asked to pass upon questions of this nature, and their decisions have the widest influence. Yet little, indeed, is done along this line. Only 2 per cent of the high-school students of Idaho take courses in direct economic training.<sup>1</sup> Courses in high-school economics are given in many states, but they are not effective, and for the same reasons that the teaching of civics is not effective.

<sup>1</sup> Eighty-eight out of an enrolment of 7,400. Haynes in his *Economics in the Secondary Schools* (Houghton Mifflin Co.) estimates that one-fifth of the high schools in the United States, and 36 per cent of the high-school students, chiefly of *Senior rank*, take the subject. About one-third of the schools evidently require it through commercial courses.

"But," someone urges, "it is not enough that we look at the student; we should note the actual results. The present training is as good, on the whole, as it has been in times past; and we have not suffered unduly—in fact, we are progressing all the time." It can scarcely be said, however, that this reply is satisfactory. Progress there has been, it is true, but one might almost be tempted to say that this is inevitable, to a degree, where men are sincerely working for human uplift. Men may have stumbled upon success, and mistakes have been too numerous. It should be noted, moreover, that our problems are becoming more and more complex and difficult every year, because the conditions are becoming more complex and intricate and men's relations broader. Success in the future is going to be harder to attain. Again, as has been noted, we are constantly being asked to pass directly upon questions that we could at one time refer to our representatives and hold them responsible. Perhaps, indeed, our effort to secure direct legislation is a confession of our failure in the past. If it be said that more people are thinking about these things than ever before, it may be replied that they have been forced to a position where further avoidance of facing the responsibility has become out of the question. It should be noted, too, that even in this day, when we point with some pride to the larger interest which is being manifested in these problems, the majority of people are still "on the outside." To take a single illustration: when the state of Ohio was passing upon the provisions in her new constitution in 1912, the vote cast on these most important of all political questions ran from only 15 per cent to less than 50 per cent of the possible vote. Does this indicate an overwhelming interest in matters of this nature? It may be that it indicates, rather, a recognition of the inability of citizens to pass upon these problems and an effort to avoid the responsibility, though it is readily admitted that this is by no means the full explanation. Yet the vast number of fruitless discussions and senseless arguments that we constantly hear on civic and social questions are in themselves indications of men's inability to deal adequately with these matters, and at the same time it bears out the assertion that men are wanting to know and would contribute were they given a chance. With the increasing complexity of our



life, the ill-informed, untrained man in the judging of economic and social questions becomes a daily increasing menace. The real leaders are ordinarily college men and women—those who have had the advantage of thorough training in matters social and political.

Or, if the optimist still be insistent that we judge by results, let us use another standard.

In its recent report, the United States Commission that is investigating industrial discontent notes and deplores a growing spirit of disregard for authority and law and increasing lack of respect for the courts; and this spirit it finds alike among the employers and the employed.

In his inaugural address Governor Charles S. Whitman of New York corroborates that finding. Disregard of law, the governor declared, impatience with legal and moral restraints, contempt for the judicial and executive ministers of justice, are phenomena observable in all American communities and all classes.<sup>1</sup>

And because our educational system produces good engineers or doctors, it does not follow that these men are able to cope with social questions. Measured by whatever standard we choose, the result shows a lamentable lack of knowledge and preparedness to meet the situation. "Soundness of society and civilization," we say, "rest upon education." We weaken it, then, at our peril.

The question, therefore, presents itself: What is being done, and what may be done to improve this lamentable situation? Three lines of activity are suggested, none of them wholly new, yet all of them capable of tremendous development. They can merely be suggested in this article.

The first is that the teaching of civics needs to be thoroughly revised. The text needs to be carefully selected, for "any text summarizing the federal and state constitutions" will not do. In the first place, the content of the constitution may be presented in ways either good or bad, and with varying emphasis. In the next place, the constitution, and even the statutory additions to our law, are far from explaining our governmental institutions.

But the good textbook on government is not sufficient. A more or less extensive and compulsory use of magazines and newspapers should be insisted upon. Repeated and thorough visits to courts,

<sup>1</sup> Editorial in *Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, Washington), January 3, 1915.

council meetings, and the like should be made.<sup>1</sup> Sample naturalization blanks, applications for passports, warrants for arrest, subpoenas, and similar documents can be secured with practically no effort, and should be used freely. It is amazing how much genuine interest is created in this way, and how much more real the work becomes.

The second suggestion is the introduction of a required course in social science. The criticism of a plan calling for the introduction of new courses is always based upon the plea that we already have too many, and that proper emphasis upon the old ones is good enough. The same argument was met with upon the introduction of the kindergartens and the manual-training courses, but both have come to stay. Attention is called to the fact that it is not economics or sociology, as such, that is called for. These are too technical branches of human knowledge to have any great place in the secondary schools. It is chiefly because of this misdirected effort that the science of economics has not been more widely adopted and retained than has been the case. A course in social science, however, need not be over-technical, and yet can be made to serve as an introduction to further study in a most admirable way. And if it be charged that such a course should not be allowed to precede the work that is commonly known as elementary economics or principles of sociology, it can be replied that logically the statement is true, yet in the interests of the greater number and under the stress of all of the circumstances, the strict logic may be allowed to give way before the greater need of service. The chief trouble here arises from the lack of a satisfactory text covering just the right ground and adapted to the secondary schools. The difficulty can be met, however, by a careful selection of a combination of texts to meet the present need, or until a satisfactory text does appear. Ellwood's volume entitled *Sociology and Modern Social Problems*, for example, might well serve as the basis of the work. The course should be planned to cover not less than a semester—a year is preferable. The same thing is true of the course in civics.

<sup>1</sup> Visits of this nature need to be carefully planned and conducted and not taken "any old time." The writer has seen, within six months, a class of some size file into a court in active session, accompanied by the teacher, remain less than five minutes, and then file out again. Such visits do little or no good.

A part of one semester is not enough even to introduce a subject of this nature.

The third line of endeavor is one that is already being carried out to a degree. I refer to the correlation of the various parts of the curriculum. "The plea that I have to make, then," wrote President Vincent, of the University of Minnesota, upon one occasion, "is not a plea for anthropology in the second grades, nor a demand for sociology in the high school, but an urgent appeal for the unifying of the curriculum by social philosophy, concealed in the lower stages from the pupils, but clearly present in the mind of the teacher." Suppose that in history a little less emphasis should be laid upon what has been as a thing in itself and a little more emphasis put upon what *has been in relation to what is*; that the mere routine giving of facts be emphasized less, and a little more attention be given to the interpretation of the social and economic force underlying those facts, and to current events. Surely then the student would find his work both more interesting and more valuable. In literature, again, suppose that when some character comes into conflict with a social institution—and by far the greater part of our great masterpieces originate through just some such action—instead of confining attention to the beauty of the wording or to the study of the costumes, or to the inner workings of the mind of the character, a broader view be taken, not to the neglect, surely, of these other things, but in conjunction with them. One can scarcely deny, I think, that such a grouping of facts would make the student infinitely more capable of meeting the social questions which he has to meet when he goes into the world. And turn about is fair play. When in civics or history the student turns in poorly spelled work or poorly constructed sentences and paragraphs, it would seem to be proper that attention be given to this fact. One may reply that this is done now. In many instances, yes. But within the last year the writer has heard many a teacher say that if the student gets the particular work in a subject, that is satisfactory. "So long as he thinks right and has the facts for which I am responsible, that is all I care," is a statement made to me recently, by a school man very advanced in most ways. Yet, clearly, he was in the wrong.